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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington, D.C. 20250 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2604

April 2, 1993

FOODS STAMPS AND THE ECONOMY -- USDA's food stamp program has reached a record level of participation. 26 million Americans are receiving food stamps, the highest level of participation since the program began in 1964. Nearly two million people were added to the roles last year and the list continues to grow, 213,000 were added in January. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy says the need for food assistance has risen so rapidly that one in ten Americans are receiving food stamps, proving the need to take steps to stimulate the economy. **Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.**

RURAL HOUSING LOANS -- USDA will release ahead of schedule \$455 million for rural housing loans to help meet demand and boost the economy. Originally scheduled for use in the third and fourth quarters of this fiscal year, the early release will take advantage of the coming construction season. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy says the funds will provide modest homes for more than 30,000 people, and give the rural economy a lift. The money represents the remainder of \$1.3 billion appropriated for USDA's Farmers Home Administration in 1993 for its single-family housing direct loan program.

COLD TOLERANT OATS -- 20 years of research by scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service has resulted in a new line of oats that have a much improved chance of surviving winter freezing. Severe winter cold often kills young oat seedlings planted in the fall, and summer heat and drought can reduce the yield of spring-planted oats. The new breeding line, Pennline 40, survives winter freezing and can be ready to harvest before the summer drought. Commercial varieties using Pennline 40 could be available in five years. **Contact: David Livingston (814) 865-1141.**

PRESCRIPTION FARMING -- Scientists at USDA's Agricultural Research Service have developed sensors that identify parts of fields that need less herbicide. The sensor reads light reflected by soil. Areas with the least amount of organic matter reflect more light and need less herbicide. Another sensor helps to accurately determine the amount of nitrogen fertilizer for crops by measuring the amount of chlorophyll in plants. The sensor research is part of USDA's national water quality initiative. USDA is working with a private firm to prepare sensors for commercial use. **Contact: Dale Bucks (301) 504-7034.**

VEGETABLE IMPORTS HIGHER -- The word to eat more vegetables to maintain health is apparently catching on. Recent figures for seasonal import of vegetables in January show an increase of 27 percent over December figures to \$270 million. All agricultural imports during January were three percent higher than in December, at \$2.1 billion. U.S. agricultural exports dropped 3 percent in January to \$3.7 billion, giving the U.S. an agricultural trade surplus of \$1.6 billion, ten percent less than in December. **Contact: Steve MacDonald (202) 219-0822.**

NATURAL PESTICIDES -- Certain natural plant chemicals impair an insect's ability to digest and assimilate nutrients. Scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service have discovered that one of these chemicals, precocene II, prevents the corn earworm larvae from developing normally. Scientists are studying plant compounds that might serve as models for manufacturing natural pesticides. One strategy could be to genetically engineer crop plants to produce biopesticides harmful to marauding insects such as the corn earworm. **Contact: Bradley Binder (515) 294-6948.**

BUYING DOWN -- As incomes are squeezed, consumers are steering away from highly processed, premium-priced foods. Sales of prepared foods, such as entrees for microwaving and other "heat and serve" foods, were down 40 percent for some items last year. In 1993 expected stronger economic conditions are forecast to influence a two to four percent increase in food prices. **Contact: Ralph Parlett (202) 219-0870.**

FOOD AID -- The United States is the leader in world food aid, providing about 60 percent of total world cereal aid shipments. In comparison the European Community provides about 20 percent, Canada 10 percent, Japan about 4 percent, and Australia about 3 percent. The U.S. provides a variety of commodities for food aid programs, ranging from bulk unprocessed items to foods easily used in relief camps. The two largest donated commodities in terms of value are grains, about 60 percent, and vegetable oil, accounting for 20 percent of U.S. food aid value. **Contact: Mark Smith (202) 219-0820.**

CROP ROTATION CONTROLS WEEDS -- Jointed goatgrass is a weed that has infested three million acres of winter wheat in the midwest and Pacific northwest, and has cut yields as much as 25 percent in badly infested fields. USDA studies in Colorado show that switching from winter wheat to corn, sorghum or sunflower for two years reduced the number of goatgrass weeds by 80 percent. Alex Ogg, a plant physiologist with the Agricultural Research Service, says three spring-planted crops are needed where wheat fields have severe goatgrass infestations. He recommends growers plant spring wheat, barley, canola, peas, or lentils in rotation with winter wheat. **Contact: Alex Ogg (509) 355-1551.**

THE FEW -- Latest statistics show that farm production employment, which includes farm owners and hired farmworkers, provides 3.2 million jobs. The figures are contained in a recently released USDA publication "U.S. Farm and Farm-Related Employment in 1989." Farm and farm-related industries provided 23 million jobs, about 17 percent of U.S. employment. But most of the employment, about 80 percent, is in farm-related wholesale and retail trade industries -- such as grocery stores and restaurants -- and located in metro counties. Three million people are employed in agricultural processing and marketing. The publication shows that the employment of many depends on the production of a few. **Contact: Alexander Majchrowicz (202) 219-0525.**

STATES WHERE HIGHEST PERCENT OF JOBS ARE FARM AND FARM RELATED

STATE	%	STATE	%	STATE	%	STATE	%
Iowa	27.2	Arkansas	23.6	Montana	21.8	SCarolina	20.2
SDakota	26.7	NCarolina	23.1	Tennessee	21.7	Georgia	19.6
NDakota	26.4	Kentucky	22.8	Alabama	21.1	Oregon	19.5
Nebraska	25.0	Mississippi	22.3	Maine	20.8	Minnesota	19.3
Idaho	24.8	Wisconsin	22.0	Kansas	20.7	Missouri	18.9

Claude Gifford

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA # 1869 -- In this edition a review of the road, rail and air transportation that delivers the nation's produce to market. **Brenda Curtis** talks with experts in the transportation industry. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME # 1351 -- Springtime food safety; five a day; bird is the word; homeless children; fool's gold. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1861 -- USDA News Highlights; staying eligible for USDA programs; prospective plantings; helping beginning farmers; a new artichoke variety. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1614 -- Soil sensor cuts herbicide use; satellites & tractors; cold-hardy oats; fooling fruit flies; crop rotation plan stifles goat weed. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Monday, Apr. 12, U.S. crop production, world ag supply & demand; Tuesday, Apr. 13, world ag/grain production; world oilseed situation, world cotton situation, weekly weather & crop outlook; Thursday, Apr. 15, milk production; Friday, Apr. 16, vegetable production. **These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.**

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359.

Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- **Pat O'Leary** reports on Easter egg supplies; **Chris Larson** reviews the results of conservation compliance.

ACTUALITIES -- USDA meteorologist **Norton Strommen** on the weather and crop outlook; USDA economist **Diane Bertelsen** on fruit outlook; USDA economist **Cathy Greene** on the agricultural outlook; USDA economist **David Harvey** on aquaculture.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- **Lynn Wyvill** reports on the national parasite collection; **Pat O'Leary** covers the tomato "killers"; **DeBoria Janifer** reviews diet and cholesterol.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- **Agriculture Update** with anchors **Eric Parsons** and **Lori Spiczka**. 4:30 of USDA farm program information in news desk format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

WHITEFLY NUMBERS...are 20-times higher than last year, says **Jim Hearn** (KURV, Edinburg, TX), and if producers don't get rain in April to reduce the count there will be trouble in May. Whiteflies migrate during the growing season from cabbage to melons to cotton, exploding in numbers. Jim says there were 2,000 per leaf in 1991 when the pest cost growers \$170,000,000.

THERE'S NO ENTHUSIASM...to get back into the fields, says **Randy Rasmussen** (KMA, Shenandoah, IA), because farmers just got out. Corn was being harvested in January and February. Randy is busy working as chairman of NAFB's Washington Ag Watch program, May 15-18, lining up a series of speakers at USDA and Capitol Hill.

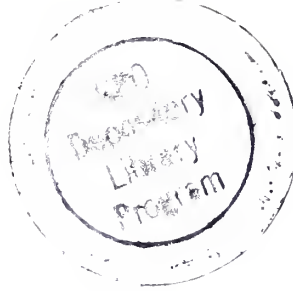
PRODUCERS...are telling **Bill Ray** (Agrinet Farm Radio Network, Elizabeth City, NC) that a method to improve the farm economy would be an investment tax credit for new equipment. Congratulations to Bill, his company has purchased 100,000 watt WCXL-FM, in Kill Devil Hills, NC.

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EXPANSION OF LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION...is scheduled for Ohio, says **Joe Cornely** (WRFD, Columbus, OH). A packing plant task force says the state will look favorably on the growth. Expansion of the packing plant is underway. Joe says producers are itching to plant, but dry weather is needed.

WATER IS FLOWING...over the spillways at the state's two biggest reservoirs, says **Roy Isom** (KMJ, Fresno, CA), a major change from conditions for the past six years. Plans are being discussed about what to do with the excess water, such as pumping it back into the ground to raise the water tables. Roy says there continues to be talk about cutting back water to farmers in order to save nonnative fish. Congratulations to Roy. His local newspaper, the FRESNO BEE, produced a profile on Roy and his farm broadcasting career.

ITS TOO WET...to plant spring wheat, but the delay also means irrigation pumps will be turn on later in the year, says **Kelly Klaas** (KEZJ-AM-FM, Twin Falls, ID). Kelly's company bought KLIX AM-FM in Twin Falls, and will transfer KEZJ-AM programming to the more powerful KLIX-AM. FCC duopoly rules require that one AM station be sold. Kelly says KEZJ will go dark until sold.

VIC POWELL *Vic Powell*
Chief, Radio & TV Division